

Milstead and Frinsted Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118648
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339265
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phebe Chamberlain
Headteacher	Simeon Corfield
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2007
School address	School Lane Sittingbourne ME9 0SJ
Telephone number	01795 830241
Fax number	01795 830506
Email address	office@milstead.kent.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, involving all the teaching staff in the school during the inspection and attended an assembly. Meetings were held with the chair of governors, the executive headteacher, acting headteacher, staff and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's planning documents, assessment information and pupils' work. In addition, 29 parent and 10 staff questionnaires were received and analysed along with questionnaires from 35 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress pupils make, particularly in Key Stage 2
- the impact of the action taken to improve pupils' attendance
- how well recent links with the federation schools are adding to pupils' educational experience.

Information about the school

The pupils in this small rural school are mainly from White British backgrounds, but a range of other heritages are represented in small numbers. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than in the majority of schools. Almost a third of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is higher than in most schools. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes, and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school after Reception is high.

The school has undergone a significant period of staffing turbulence, with many changes of teachers and temporary leadership arrangements in the two years after the last inspection. Currently the school is led by an acting headteacher who has been in post for the whole of the academic year. Following partnership work over the last year with two local primary schools and consultation with parents and carers, the school entered a formal federation under the leadership of an executive headteacher and reconstituted governing body in April 2010. A governing body committee oversees the day-to-day issues relating to Milstead and Frinsted School. A substantive head of school has been appointed to take up post in September 2010.

The school holds Healthy School, Activemark, Eco School and Green Flag awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Milstead and Frinsted School is a very caring and happy school where everyone is given a warm welcome. It is greatly valued by its local community which is passionate and protective of it. Parents and carers particularly appreciate the work undertaken by the acting headteacher and staff this year, commenting on how the changes made have 'got the school back on line'. They also commend the 'professionalism of the teaching staff' during a difficult time when their workload was increased to manage the day-to-day running of the school. The increased stability achieved now through the recent appointments of an executive headteacher and a head of school mean that the leadership of the school has been secured. The school is no longer reliant on supply and temporary teachers. Staff morale is high. Teachers and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are enthusiastic about the future and have the skills necessary to make further improvements. Currently the school provides a satisfactory quality of education for pupils.

Children get a firm foundation for later learning in the Reception Year. Following the last inspection, pupils did not make enough progress through Key Stage 2. Sound and consistent teaching through the school now is helping pupils to make up earlier lost ground, making sure that achievement is now satisfactory and improving quickly. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average. Teachers plan lessons which interest pupils so that they enjoy their learning. However, there is still scope for teachers to have higher expectations of what pupils can do and to be more precise in planning for the learning to be achieved in each lesson. High levels of adult support mean that pupils' work is supervised closely but sometimes pupils become overly reliant on adult help. Pupils have a good awareness of the quality of their work and what they have to do to improve, but are not routinely required to respond to their teacher's comments when their work is marked. Links with the other schools in the federation are used well to enrich pupils' experiences through joint activities and opportunities to work in larger groups, such as attending an author's workshop during the inspection.

Pupils flourish personally in the small school setting because they are known and valued individually. The good care, guidance and support for them are shown in pupils feeling safe and secure. They know exactly what they should do if anything concerns them. Pupils are rightly proud of the contribution they make to their school, acting as school councillors, assembly monitors or playground friends for younger children. The school has taken a number of effective actions to improve attendance but more remains to be done. Overall attendance is low, mainly because of the persistent absence of a few pupils.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment by improving the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good and ensuring that teachers more consistently:
 - identify the precise learning to be achieved by the end of the lesson
 - raise expectations of what pupils can do in the time set
 - give pupils more tasks to be completed independently
 - provide time for pupils to respond to the points made when their work is marked.
- Improve attendance overall, particularly of those pupils who find it difficult to attend regularly by:
 - involving external agencies more to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to improve attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils are positive about their school and enjoy all that it offers. They say that they get along well with one another and that they enjoy 'learning new things'. Pupils respond well to the practical approach taken to learning, shown in their good behaviour and concentration in lessons. Pupils' attainment is broadly average, although it varies from year to year, and the low numbers in each year group make comparisons with national averages unreliable. However, staffing disruptions in recent years impacted negatively on pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 and results in the Year 6 national tests were below average. Performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is relatively even, although reading is stronger than writing, in line with national performance. This is being tackled successfully and older pupils in particular are now making good progress in writing. The focused action taken this year to accelerate pupils' progress, often through additional support programmes, has proved positive. Pupils are now making the progress expected nationally. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who join the school part way through their primary education. Pupils' understanding of the level of their work and sound basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills give them a firm basis for secondary education.

Pupils are caring and supportive of one another, for example in looking after new arrivals to the school. The school is effective in encouraging pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles, such as in the sports activity run by external coaches during the inspection. Pupils are very active at lunch time and there is a high take-up of sporting opportunities. Year 6 pupils make a good contribution to school life by running regular 'Wake Up, Shake Up' sessions for others. Prompted by the school's rural setting, pupils have a strong awareness of environmental issues, shown in the school's Eco School and Green Flag awards.

Pupils support local events, such as providing art work for the church, and staff

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recognise that links with partner schools can be used to provide more opportunities for pupils to broaden their contribution beyond their immediate surroundings. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is underpinned by the school's faith status, and pupils have a satisfactory understanding of other faiths and cultures. When given the opportunity, pupils show a keen response to ethical issues, such as the potential impact on indigenous Australian culture when their children were removed from their families. Pupils regularly raise money for charity, responding to specific appeals such as the Haiti earthquake.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers present their lessons in a way which interests pupils and use modern technology effectively to present information visually and enliven learning. Pupils respond well to teachers' clear expectations of good behaviour so that time is not wasted. However, teacher introductions are sometimes overly long, which restricts the time available for pupils to learn by doing things for themselves. Activities are routinely organised to meet the needs of the different ages and abilities in each class, but in a

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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few lessons, pupils' tasks were not sufficiently challenging to take learning forward quickly. Similarly, when the learning objective is too broad and imprecise, the plenary is not used effectively enough for pupils to be absolutely clear about what they have learned in the lesson. Teachers make good use of opportunities for pupils to discuss issues with their partners and this contributes effectively to pupils' good speaking and listening skills. Classroom walls are used well to promote learning through relevant displays and prompts.

Staff have taken an appropriately cautious approach to the introduction of cross-curricular work which this term is linking subjects together effectively and making learning coherent for pupils. Plans are in place to extend the approach further and to maximise the impact of the federation by including more activities with the partner schools to broaden pupils' experiences and provide opportunities to work with a wider group of peers. Learning is enriched with a series of visits and activities linked to topics being studied, such as a community project looking at local traffic issues. Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular clubs for the size of the school, providing opportunities to pursue and develop interests ranging from yoga and French to gardening and film. Sport is well represented.

The care taken with the school environment and displays of school activities demonstrates the value adults place on taking care of pupils and recognising their achievements. Improvements in tracking pupils' current levels and progress have had a positive impact on tackling underachievement. The number of programmes used to support pupils who had fallen behind nationally expected standards has been increased, and pupils involved have accelerated their progress overall. However, the school has not yet evaluated the impact of each programme to inform how such support is used in the future.

A robust approach to not authorising holidays in term time has improved attendance this year, but unauthorised absence remains high and further action is required to ensure that all pupils attend regularly. For a few pupils, poor attendance is slowing their progress. Pupils are well known as individuals and the school has increased its links this year with a range of external agencies to support pupils with complex needs and provide expertise not available in the school. Pupils value the regular formal 'pupil progress meetings' they have with their teacher to identify their targets, which help them to understand what they have to do next.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

Much has been achieved this year through working closely with the local authority to stabilise the leadership of the school and secure its future. The acting headteacher has brought a steady influence to school improvement, with an incisive analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development. The impact of the action taken is seen in significant improvement in pupils' attainment. All staff are committed to promoting equal opportunities and tackling any discrimination. A similar rigour is applied to monitoring the impact of teaching.

Staff have a shared enthusiasm for further development and are positive about the opportunities for curriculum enrichment and professional development offered by the new federation. The executive headteacher and governing body are aware of the need to ensure that there is no loss in momentum with the leadership changes in place for the next academic year. The governing body has set up appropriate structures to oversee the future strategic development of the school within the federation. Governors recognise that further training is needed for them to take a more proactive role in setting priorities and fulfilling their statutory responsibilities.

The measures to ensure the safety of pupils, including checks on adults who work in the school, are rigorous. The school is a warm and cohesive community. Staff and governors have reviewed how the school fulfils its responsibility to promote community cohesion. Plans are in place to extend opportunities for pupils to link with schools in different social contexts in the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Relationships between adults and children are strong and, as a result, children grow in confidence and feel secure in their school surroundings. They make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Attainment varies considerably from year to year depending on the abilities of each cohort. Generally, children meet or exceed the expectations for their learning at the end of the Reception Year and are well placed for learning in Year 1. Staff manage the differing needs of Reception children well alongside the other pupils in the class, and adjust activities to try to use the available space to best effect.

However, on occasion it is difficult to avoid noise transference from the activities of different groups, making it hard for children to concentrate, particularly during activities requiring them to listen carefully.

The outdoor area is used well in all weathers, but leaders are aware that further work is necessary to make more use of it to support the development of early literacy and numeracy skills. There is a satisfactory mix of adult-led activities and those giving children opportunities to pursue activities of interest to them. Children learn from a range of practical activities and good quality materials, building their understanding of the world around them. For example, during the inspection, activities were planned when a child brought in birds' nests, resulting in children learning about bird life and making their own 'nests' from a good supply of twigs and leaves. Because children are well known, the care and support for them and their families is good. Children's achievements are monitored and assessed regularly and shared imaginatively with parents and carers in the individual 'My Unique Story' record. The extent to which the daily communication book is used shows the effectiveness of the school's links with home.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, as shown in the answers to the questionnaire and in additional written comments. They particularly value the school's commitment to, and support for, individual children. They also appreciate the small size of the school, seeing this as something distinctive. Parents particularly recognise the hard work of the last year to ensure 'a strong footing' for the

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future. Inspectors agree with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Milstead and Frinsted Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 62 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	69	9	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	76	7	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	79	5	17	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	83	4	14	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	79	5	17	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	76	5	17	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	69	9	31	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	62	10	35	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	66	9	31	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	48	14	48	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	72	7	24	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	72	7	24	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	72	7	24	1	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 June 2010

Dear Pupils Inspection of Milstead and Frinsted Church of England Primary School,
Sittingbourne ME9 0SJ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about what you do and found the information you gave us very valuable. This letter is to explain to you what we found out.

The school is a happy place, where children are polite and get on well with one another. This helps new pupils to settle in quickly and feel part of the school community. You know a lot about how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy. You have many opportunities to be active in the playground and at sports clubs. I saw how many of you thoroughly enjoyed the fitness session on Friday afternoon.

Children get off to a sound start in Reception. It was good to see that older pupils are making more progress this year because you have had fewer changes of teacher. Your teachers are helping you to understand the level of your work and exactly what you have to do next. You have interesting things to do in lessons but I noticed that sometimes you wait for an adult to tell you what to do rather than following the teacher's instructions about your task for yourselves. All the staff care for you and look after you well. The acting headteacher, governors and staff are working towards making the school even better and we agree with them about the most important things that will help you to make even better progress. They are:

- to make sure that you really understand the learning objective so that you can see how much you have learned by the end of the lesson
- to expect you to do more on your own and to achieve more in the time given for your tasks
- to give you time to follow up your teachers' comments when they mark your work.

We know that you will help by continuing to do your best. A few of you do not attend as well as you could and can help by coming to school more regularly.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector

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